
VI. Sustainable Development

It is the goal of King County to work toward a model sustainable community where both the public and private sectors seek to balance urban growth with natural resource protection. Sustainable development seeks to achieve this goal by addressing the impacts of the built environment in which we live and work. Sustainable development is implemented through planning, design and construction methods, including green building and low-impact development (LID) that promote environmental quality, economic vitality and social benefits.

Current development practices contribute significantly to the adverse impacts buildings have on our environment. These impacts include heavy consumption of energy and water, large-scale production of wastes, water pollution and contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. Implementing sustainable development involves incorporating green building and LID practices into our policies through education, incentives and regulation to help reduce these negative impacts.

Green building is defined as design, construction and operational practices that significantly reduce or eliminate the negative impact of buildings through sustainable site planning, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and enhanced indoor environmental quality for occupants. One strategy of green building is LID. LID is an approach to land development that emphasizes maintaining or restoring a site's natural hydrologic function by protecting and enhancing native vegetation and soils, minimizing impervious surfaces and managing stormwater at its source.

A. Sustainable Development for King County Capital Improvement Projects

The King County Green Building Initiative establishes Executive policy to encourage and promote the use of sustainable development practices in all buildings the county constructs, remodels and renovates. By incorporating sustainable development practices when projects are in the planning and predesign phase, economic benefits may realized, including the reduction of operating costs, enhanced asset value, optimized building performance and a healthier workplace for its employees.

- U-601 King County should incorporate sustainable development principles and practices into the design, construction and operation of county facilities and county-funded projects when economically feasible.**
- U-602 The use of green building practices should be accomplished within traditional project budgets. If additional funds are sought for up-front costs, a life cycle cost analysis of the project should be completed to determine the long-term benefits of using green building practices.**
- U-604 King County should leverage its purchasing power related to capital improvement projects to help expand the markets for green building products, including recycled-content materials and clean, renewable energy technologies.**

B. Sustainable Development in the Private Sector

King County seeks to foster innovative design and development techniques in the private sector that reduce the negative impacts of site development and building construction while maintaining affordability and economic development. Similarly, King County also encourages the use of low-impact site design techniques to reduce impacts to aquatic resources.

- U- 605 **King County should encourage, support and promote the application of sustainable development practices in all private sector development within the county. This may be accomplished through working with residential and commercial developers to incorporate habitat conditions, reduce impervious surface areas, protect ground and surface water within a watershed, incorporate greater use of green building materials and utilize systems that conserve resources, including those that use energy more efficiently.**
- U-606 **King County should identify and evaluate potential changes to land use development regulations and building codes to support and promote green building and low impact development. This may be accomplished through demonstration projects to guide the application and refinement of regulations such as zoning, and road and stormwater regulations.**

C. Low-Impact Development

Current development practices can adversely impact water resources. Low-impact development (LID) is a new approach to land development which works to match a site's natural hydrologic function by protecting native vegetation and soils, reducing impervious surface and managing stormwater at the source. LID techniques include retention of native vegetation, soil amendment, rainwater harvesting, pervious pavement and bioretention.

- U-607 **King County should incorporate low-impact development principles and practices into the design, construction and operation of all county facilities and county-funded projects to the fullest extent feasible.**
- U-608 **King County should work with residential and commercial developers to incorporate low-impact development practices that protect native vegetation and soils, and reduce impervious surface.**
- U-609 **King County should identify and evaluate potential changes to land use development regulations and building codes to support and promote low-impact development. This may be accomplished through demonstration projects to guide application and refinement of regulations such as zoning, subdivision, roads and stormwater regulations.**